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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 002134

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/24/2008

TAGS: [KJUS](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [YM](#)

SUBJECT: YEMENI JUSTICE MINISTER PLANS FOR REFORM

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Alan G. Misenheimer for Reasons 1.5 (b ,d)

11. (C) Summary and comment: Charge, accompanied by pol/econoff, called on newly-appointed Minister of Justice Dr. Adnan Omar al-Jafri on August 24 to discuss judicial reform efforts in Yemen. The Minister described his methodology for approaching the reform he admits is sorely needed, highlighting specifically the role of women and the need for commercial law reform. The Minister will attend the Arab Judicial Forum in Bahrain and said repeatedly the "doors are open" for cooperation between his Ministry and the USG on reform efforts. A congenial and energetic persona, the Minister appears eager to make his mark on judicial reform. However, given the complicated and antiquated justice sector in Yemen and his newness in the ROYG Cabinet, it remains to be seen if his efforts will result in the kind of concrete reform that Yemen needs. See paragraph 7 for biographic data. End summary and comment.

He Has a Plan; Requests USG Assistance

12. (U) The Charge asked about ROYG efforts on judicial reform since 1997 and the Minister's plans for continuing reform, particularly regarding women. The Minister said he visited all twenty governorates over the summer, exploring such issues as accessibility to justice, the speed by which judgements were made and the special difficulties faced by women seeking justice. He said that eight conferences will be held over the next month covering all governorates to discuss judicial reform. The results and recommendations of the conferences will be brought together in a large gathering in Sanaa, with the aim of developing a comprehensive reform document that would provide the basis for the ROYG's reform efforts. He noted the sessions would be open to the public and invited Embassy officials to attend.

13. (U) The Minister said that the international community has not provided the necessary engagement on judicial reform. However, he admitted that part of the problem has been a ROYG reluctance to be open to such assistance, partly because of the Islamic Shari'a roots of Yemen's law practices. He emphasized that his "doors were open" to strong cooperation and assistance and said that once his reform plan is developed, he plans to engage with the donor community on a frequent basis. He said he would like to work closely with the U.S. Embassy to cooperate in "all areas" of judicial reform. He also described his efforts to modernize administrative aspects of the judicial sector that need assistance, including putting hand-written laws and court decisions on computer and training staff. (Note: Both the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme have nascent programs to assist the justice sector. Bilateral assistance is limited. End note)

Increasing Role of Women; Commercial Law Reform

14. (U) On increasing the number of women in the justice sector, the Minister said that more than half of the law students in Aden were women, noting that "all fields are open to them." (Note: Yemen currently has less than ten female judges, all of whom serve in family court. One of the participants attending the Arab Judicial Reform conference in Bahrain is a female commercial lawyer based in Aden, Reem Abdullah. End note)

15. (U) The Charge also asked about Yemen's weak commercial law courts, which the Minister agreed create a disincentive for foreign investment. Al-Jafri noted the sector only has five commercial law courts and thirty judges, not all of whom are trained in commercial law practice. He requested assistance with training programs targeting commercial law reform, including English-language training.

Attending Bahrain Conference

16. (U) Minister al-Jafri expressed appreciation for the Bahrain conference and said he looks forward to attending. He said he is particularly interested in meeting Justice Sandra Day O'Connor and discussing possible cooperation with

the United States.

Bio Data

17. (U) Biographic data for Dr. Adnan Omar al-Jafri:

-- Minister of Justice, appointed May 2003
-- Born 1961, Aden
-- PhD in International Law, Aden
-- Attorney General of Abyan Governorate
-- Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Law; Dean of the College
of Education, Abyan
-- Member of Parliament, Constituency 25
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